

MEETING ABSTRACT

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# Family support and vital exhaustion in patients with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease

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## Background

Many studies have attempted to delineate the relationship between the input in family support (FS) of patients with acute or chronic disease, as well as the effect of this support in the confrontation of illness. These studies showed a negative cross-correlation between the sense of family support and depressive or anxiety symptoms [1,2]. On the other hand, it has been observed that the presence of vital exhaustion (VE), characterized by unusual tiredness, is an aggravating factor, especially in patients with cardiovascular diseases [3,4]. Aim of the study is to investigate the association between the sense of family support and the degree of vital exhaustion in patients with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD).

## Materials and methods

One hundred and four (87 males and 17 females) outpatients with COPD participated in the study. Family support and vital exhaustion were assessed by using the 13-item Julkunen Family Support Scale (FSS) and the Maastricht Questionnaire (MQ), respectively. Age and education level were also recorded.

## Results

Mean age was 65.3 ( $\pm$  8.1) and mean education level was 10.97 ( $\pm$  4.2, in years). As to clinical measurements, mean FSS score was 54.87 ( $\pm$  7.1), whereas mean MQ score was 19.83 ( $\pm$  8.46), which is significant higher than the corresponding score (14.94) of the general population (sample t- test  $p < 0.01$ ). No correlation was observed between age, education level, FS and VE

(Pearson correlation  $p > 0.05$ ). In contrary, a strong negative correlation was presented between FS and VE (Pearson correlation  $p < 0.05$ ).

## Conclusions

Vital exhaustion seems to be present also in patients with COPD. However, further studies are required in order to clarify its associations with the comorbidities of depression and anxiety, which are common in these patients. Finally, our findings suggest the protective role of the sense of family support against vital exhaustion.

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